



Subject: English

Grade Level: Elementary School

DI Strategy: Tiered Scaffold

Elementary Main Idea Tiered Assignment Lesson

I used a tiered scaffold during a recent reading comprehension lesson in my co-taught inclusion classroom. The topic was an introduction to main idea for first graders. Since main idea can be a challenging topic for young students to understand, especially students with learning disabilities, I wanted to be sure I developed a lesson that would be appropriately tiered, concrete and differentiated to meet the needs of our diverse group.

The lesson began with a main idea "mystery bag" which had various items related to oral hygiene. The students had to observe the items and guess the main idea. The guided practice portion of the lesson had the students break into small pre-determined groups. For grouping, I took into account students' current reading levels, but also their level of comprehension. The small groups were given a bag with a main idea card in the bag and were asked to create clues or supporting details so that other groups could try to guess the main idea. Students were given the opportunity to write or illustrate depending on writing needs.

I created tiered bags to meet the needs of each specific small group. Students who struggle more with reading comprehension were given a concrete, straightforward main idea (beach, supermarket, etc.). For mid-level students, I provided main ideas that would encourage some more creative thinking. Finally, for those students who have strong reading comprehension skills and needed more of a challenge, I came up with more complex main ideas which would require higher level thinking to depict appropriate clues (i.e., how to be a good friend).

The tiered bags allowed the activity to be accessible to all of the students in the class. By allowing students who are struggling writers to draw, it gave them the opportunity to fully demonstrate their understanding without the stress of writing. After each small group created their clues, we had the students circulate to different bags and try to guess the main idea from the clues the other students had made.



At the end of the lesson we used a Plickers post-assessment which mirrored a pre-assessment Plickers question that the students had answered at the beginning of the lesson. I think if I hadn't created tiered bags for this main idea activity, the concept would have been lost on some of my students struggling with reading comprehension. In addition, my higher level students who have a clear understanding of main idea may not have been challenged to think deeper. The scaffolding allowed for all students to feel successful.